



State of Utah

JON M. HUNTSMAN, JR.
Governor

GARY R. HERBERT
Lieutenant Governor

Department of Human Services

LISA-MICHELE CHURCH
Executive Director

Division of Child and Family Services

DUANE E. BETOURNAY
Director

December 6, 2007

Dan Grinder, Chairperson
Quality Improvement Committee
Western Region

Dear Mr. Grinder,

We received the letter from your committee related to the concerns and suggestions for improvement to the current system of licensing foster homes. We very much appreciate the energy and thoughtfulness that went into assessing the system and developing these recommendations.

We share the concerns about time delays for potential foster families wanting to become licensed. Our having sufficient numbers and types of foster homes available are critical to our being able to make the most appropriate placement for the children in our care.

I will respond to each area of recommendation:

Make monies available for the Office of Licensing to hire additional staff:

We agree with the recommendation and are please to report that the Office of Licensing has received permission to add one additional staff person in the current year. This permission came from the Legislature at the request of Lisa-Michele Church. The Office of Licensing has requested additional staff, and these requests are being evaluated prior to the legislative session.

Authorize DCFS to assist with home studies for new homes:

We accept your recommendations regarding establishing a system for DCFS staff to be authorized to complete home studies for new homes as written. We would like to explore this possibility with the Office of Licensing and the Executive Directors Office within the Department of Human Services. This may or may not be in conflict with the statutory mission of the Office of Licensing and may also conflict with existing rules regarding who can conduct a home study. The bottom line however is that this is a great idea, and one that we want to fully explore.

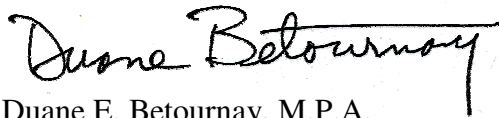
In addition, there is a process improvement committee that has been chartered by the Department to look at the process of licensing from beginning to end. We will ensure that this is one of the proposals that are considered by those on the review committee. Results from this review will be made final within the next three weeks. Once those findings are made public, we will make those available to you for review.

DHS to thoroughly evaluate the pros and cons of bringing the office of licensing back under the authority and supervision of the Division of Child and Family Services:

We accept this recommendation, and again will ensure that there is every consideration about the most appropriate and effective placement of these responsibilities within the Dept of Human Services. This part of your recommendation becomes even more complex given the already existing statutory creation of the Office of Licensing. I will commit to explore this issue with the Department Executive Director, Lisa-Michele Church, and will report back to the Western Region Quality Improvement Committee at the next available date. Please let me know when you think that your agenda would accommodate my participation.

We very much appreciate the committee's assessment of this very large and complicated issue. When the quality improvement committees were initially envisioned, it was precisely this sort of outside perspective and feedback we hoped for.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Duane Betournay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Duane E. Betournay, M.P.A.

Director

Division of Child and Family Services